III

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE FOR 1929-30.

* The hon. Mr. T. E. Moir :—" I beg to move, Sir—

'*that with a view to the Constitution of a Committee on Public Accounts for the year 1929-30 this Council do proceed on a date to be fixed by the hon. the President to elect seven members to be members of the said Committee.*'

"I move this motion, Sir, with reference to Legislative Council Rule 33, sub-clause 1, which says

' As soon as may be after the commencement of each financial year, a Committee on Public Accounts shall be constituted for the purpose of dealing with the appropriation of the accounts of the Province and the report of the Audit Officer thereon and such other matters as the Finance Department may refer to the Committee.'

" When the Council has elected seven members to serve on this Committee, its constitution will be completed by the action of the Governor in nominating three members bringing the total up to ten."

* The hon. Khan Bahadur Sir Muhammad Usman Sahib Bahadur :— " I second it."

* The hon. the President :—" The question is about the Constitution of the Public Accounts Committee."

* Mr. A. Ranganatha Mudaliyar :—" Before this question is put to the vote, I should like to know whether it is necessary at all to have a fresh Committee for this purpose. Will it not be sufficient if a resolution were passed saying that the existing committee might continue for two months more? If there is any possibility or certainty of elections coming on soon, I propose that the present Committee be continued."

* The hon. Mr. T. E. Moir :—" Perhaps, I may explain that this Committee is to function for the year 1929-30. The existing Committee under the terms of its constitution continues only up to the end of the current year but a Committee is required to do the business of the Public Accounts Committee which generally comes before it in June. Every year we get through as much of the work which comes before the Finance Committee as possible at Ootacamund. This will also be done in the current year though I am unable to anticipate when work which will have to be done in the year 1929-30 will be completed."

* Mr. A Ranganatha Mudaliyar :—" I do not think I have made my point clear."

* The hon. the President :—" Order, order. I do not think the hon. Member can have another chance."

* Mr. C. V. Venkataramana Ayyangar :—" I would just say, Sir, that the suggestion of Mr. Ranganatha Mudaliyar which I also repeat was this. That if the Council is to be dissolved very soon, there would be only about two or three months for this Committee to work, that is to say during April, May and June or about that time. I think we had a precedent in 1926. The present Committee for 1928-29 may by a resolution of this House be asked to continue for 1929-30 also. I do so because the period is a short one and further the House wants to know whether the House is likely to work for a long period or for a short period. If it is only for a short period, I propose, Sir, that the present Committee may continue to function for that period."

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* The hon. Sir NORMAN MARJORIBANKS :—" Unfortunately I cannot give any information at all. Normally the Council ends in December this year and whether it will be dissolved by His Excellency earlier or no, I cannot say. I believe there is also a provision in the Act for its extension. At present there is no proposal to extend the Council."

* Mr. C. GOPALA MENON :—" The point at issue raised by Mr. Ranganatha Mudaliyar is whether the Finance Member or this House is agreeable for the present Committee to continue for the next few months. That point has not been answered by the Finance Member. Is the House disposed to continue the present Committee? That is Mr. Ranganatha Mudaliyar's motion."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" Hon. Members would have done well if they had handed a motion to me to the effect that the present Committee may continue to function instead of bargaining after the motion had been tabled."

Mr. ABDUL HAMEED KHAN :—" I move, Sir, that the House do pass on to the next item on the agenda."

* Mr. D. NARAYANA RAJU :—" I second it."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" The question is the House do pass on to the next item on the agenda."

* The hon. Mr. T. E. MOIR :—" Perhaps, I might supplement my explanation by stating that under the rules of the Council this Committee of Public Accounts shall be constituted as soon as may be after the commencement of each financial year. The constitution of the Committee is not completed until His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to nominate three members to the Committee. In order to enable the constitution of the Committee to be completed it is necessary as the Council rises, I believe this year on the 27th of March, that the preliminary stage of the election of seven members of the Committee should be completed before it rises. Otherwise steps for the constitution of the Committee cannot be taken until the first meeting of the Council in the following financial year which, as a rule, takes place about the month of August, that is to say, there will be no Committee to carry out the business of the Public Accounts Committee until some time in the month of August or later. It is in order to avoid that contingency that this motion is moved about this time each year. If no Committee is constituted, then, of course, the Public Accounts Committee will not exist and none of the work awaiting it (and some work is generally ready by the month of May or June) can possibly be undertaken."

* Mr. S. SATYAMURTI :—" Sir, rule 33 to which the hon. the Finance Member referred begins thus: 'As soon as may be after the commencement of each financial year, a committee on Public Accounts shall be constituted . . .' The financial year has not yet closed. We are to-day on the 11th March and there are twenty days more before the close of the financial year. In order to enable His Excellency the Governor to nominate three members, this Council is now asked to elect seven members, three weeks before the close of the financial year. Normally, there can be no objection. That is to say, if this is a year in which the term of this Council would not expire, there can be no objection and it will be quite proper for us to go on with the election. We are not told whether that is so or not. The hon. the Revenue 11-30 a.m.

Member has given us only a blank reply to our enquiry. The Treasury bench, whether wittingly or unwittingly, will not take us into its confidence as to the life of this Council, and we are told 'you had better elect this Committee in the hope that it will continue to serve for another year.' I think the motion to pass on to the next item in the agenda will not defeat any real purpose in forming this Committee.

"The only argument which the hon. the Finance Member mentioned, to which some importance should be attached, is that work which should normally be done at Ootacamund during the months of May and June may not be done this year. Assuming that it is not done, what happens? The Committee can meet in Madras after the Government returns to Madras. It is not a Committee which meets all the months of the year. Suppose the Government returns in August, the Committee can meet in September. That would suffice, seeing that generally the report of the Committee does not come to us till about the month of March of the next year following. I therefore submit that nothing serious will be lost by putting it off.

"So far as we are concerned, we want to know what we are doing. We want to know whether the term of the members whom we elect to the Committee will close with the close of the next financial year or whether they will cease to be members some time in September, October or November. I think it is proper that before the Government come to us with a motion asking us to elect members to a committee we should at least know the life of that Committee. It seems to me that the question of the remaining members being nominated by the Governor may as well be done even on the 31st March. Assuming that this motion is carried and this item is passed over, there is nothing in the rules or the Standing Orders which prevents a similar motion being tabled for the 27th March, that is, the last day on which the Council will sit before the end of this financial year. I hope then it may be possible for the hon. the Revenue Member to give us some information as to the life of this Council. He shakes his head to indicate a negative reply. Probably he has no information to give now. Anyhow, there are fifteen days more for the last sitting of the Council in this financial year and within that time I am almost certain there will be some information on which we can act with a little more knowledge. Therefore I think this House will be consulting its own best interests to agree to this motion and leave the Government to bring it, later on, on a more suitable date."

* Mr. S. Arpudaswami Udayar:—"Mr. President, I do not quite agree with my hon. Friend for the University. I do not see why he should make so much ado about this matter of election to the Public Accounts Committee. He wants to know whether the life of this Council will be prolonged. I think that normally the Committee we are asked to elect will function for two or three months. If we do not at this meeting and to-day elect or make arrangements for election of the members of the Committee, we would not have time to do that. From to-morrow we have twelve days allotted for budget motions and if we do not make arrangements to-day to elect these members, it will be impossible for us to elect them until we meet in July or August. Therefore, I think, we should proceed to elect on a date to be fixed by the hon. the President seven members to be members of the Committee."

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*Mr. A. RANGANATHA MUDALIYAR:—"Sir, I do not think that the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend Mr. Arpudaswami Udayar are serious. If a Committee is going to function for one year it is one matter, but if it is to function only for two or three months it is quite a different matter. The present members who are on the Committee have gained some experience in regard to the examination of details and coming to conclusions thereon. Therefore, if it is only a question of two months, it is better that these people who are there on it continue; but if it is for one year we may think of changing the personnel of the Committee."

The motion that the Council do pass on to the next item on the agenda was then put and lost.

*The hon. the PRESIDENT:—"Mr. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar proposes to move the following motion as a substitute for the motion of the hon. the Finance Member:—

'The present elected members of the Public Accounts Committee do continue for 1929-30 as members thereof.'

"He has referred only to the elected members I think it is in order."

*Mr. R. SRINIVASA AYYANGAR:—"Sir, I beg to move the following which stands against my name, namely:—

'*that the present elected members of the Public Accounts Committee do continue for* 1929-30 *as members thereof.*'

"The object of this motion is not in any way to fetter the discretion of His Excellency in the matter of nominating three members to the Public Accounts Committee—a right and a privilege which inheres in him It seeks to limit its scope to the elected members of the Public Accounts Committee. The hon. the Leader of the House has not taken us into his confidence in the matter of the duration of this Council. He seems to be as ignorant of the future possibilities in this respect as we on this side of the House are. Anyhow, our experience shows that in the year 1923 and 1926 the Council was dissolved by about the 15th September. Likewise, this Council will normally be dissolved somewhere about the middle of September this year, unless its life is extended by six months or one year or, as people in some quarters believe, by two years consequent on an amendment which may be eventually passed at one of the short sittings of the House of Commons. If this House is to have its normal life only, the new Committee, which is attempted to be ushered into being, can be expected to function only for five months. For that short period I do not think there is any necessity to have a different set of men or the present majority displaced by a few new men. So far as we are concerned, we have every confidence in the present members of the Public Accounts Committee and we do not want to throw them overboard by having a different set of men. For the sake of three or four months it is hardly desirable that all the formalities connected with an election should be gone through. We expected the Leader of the House to tell us something more and, in the absence of further information on the subject and in the absence of any help which we have a right to expect from the hon. the Leader of the House, the only course open to us is to have the existing men on the committee and thereby preserve the *status quo ante.*"

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* Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—" I beg to second this motion and in so doing I would like to ask whether anything has been done to hold the election this year. I think it is usual about this time of the year to ask the village officers. . ."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" For this motion, I am afraid, a reference to the postponement of the elections will not be relevant."

* Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—" I mention that only as one of the reasons why we should. . ."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" I hope the hon. Member will not develop it too much."

* Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—" I simply want information whether any steps have been taken or any correspondence is going on between this Government and the Government of India regarding a short postponement if not a long postponement of the elections."

* The hon. Mr. T. E. MOIR :—" Sir, I have two difficulties in dealing with this motion. In the first place I have no more information to give on the point raised than my hon. Colleague, the Revenue Member. It seems to me however that this question itself is extraneous to the motion before the House. However much it may have been relevant to the previous motion that we should proceed to the next item on the agenda, it does not seem to me to be very relevant to the question of the constitution of the Public Accounts Committee. Personally I feel unable to accept the motion for the following reasons: While I entirely agree with the hon. Mover of the motion as to the fact that we have an efficient Committee at present, I have to remember that it is and has been the privilege of this House year by year to elect members to this Committee and I cannot see any special circumstance why I should join my hon. Friends opposite on this motion to deprive the House of that privilege. In the second place, to serve on the Public Accounts Committee is, I believe, an object of ambition of a large number of Members of the Council and I am afraid I cannot agree with the hon. Mover in saying that we should deprive such hon. Members as are anxious to serve on that Committee of the opportunity of seeking that privilege in the ordinary course."

The motion was put and declared carried.

A poll was demanded and the House divided thus :—

Ayes.

1. Mr. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar.
2. ,, S Satyamurti.
3. ,, C. V. Venkataramana Ayyangar.
4. ,, J. A. Saldanha.
5. ,, Abdul Hameed Khan.
6. ,, L. K. Tulasiram.
7. ,, K. V. R. Swami.
8. ,, D. Narayana Raju.
9. ,, P. Anjaneyulu.
10. ,, A. Parasurama Rao.
11. ,, P. Adinarayana Chettiyar.
12. Mr. A. Kaleswara Rao.
13. ,, C. N. Muthuranga Mudaliyar.
14. ,, A. Ranganatha Mudaliyar.
15. Diwan Bahadur R. N. Arogyaswami Mudaliyar.
16. Zamindar of Gollapalli.
17. Mr. C. R. Parthasarathy Ayyangar.
18. ,, T. C. Srinivasa Ayyangar.
19. ,, R. Nagan Gowda.
20. ,, C. Gopala Menon.

Noes.

1. The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks.
2. ,, Khan Bahadur Sir Muhammad Usman Sahib Bahadur.
3. ,, Mr. T. E. Moir.
4. The hon. Diwan Bahadur M. Krishnan Nayar.
5. ,, Mr. M. R. Seturatnam Ayyar.
6. ,, Mr. S. Muthiah Mudaliyar.

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Noes—cont.

7. The hon. Dr. P. Subbarayan.
8. Mr. Hilton Brown.
9. ,, H. A. Watson.
10. ,, C. A. Souter.
11. ,, S. H. Slater.
12. ,, A. McG. C. Tampoe.
13. ,, C. W. E. Cotton.
14. ,, V. Ch. John.
15. ,, M. A. Manikkavelu Nayakar.
16. ,, Syed Tajudin Sahib.
17. ,, A. B. Shetty.
18. ,, P. J. Gnanavaram Pillai.
19. ,, Mahmud Schamnad.
20. The Zamindar of Singampatti.
21. Mr. J. Kuppuswami.
22. Subadar-Major S. A. Nanjappah Bahadur.
23. Mr. K. Krishnan.
24. ,, N. Siva Raj.
25. Rao Sahib L. C. Guruswami.
26. Mr. V. I. Muniswami Pillai.
27. ,, W. P. A. Soundara Pandia Nadar.
28. ,, S Subrahmanya Moopanar.
29. Mr. S. Venkiah.
30. ,, C. E. Wood.
31. ,, F. E. James.
32. ,, R. J. C. Robertson.
33. ,, H. F. P. Hearson.
34. ,, S. N. Dorai Raja.
35. ,, S. Arpudaswami Udayar.
36. ,, U. Ramaswami Ayyar.
37. ,, V. Ramjee Rao.
38. ,, P. Siva Rao.
39. ,, B. Ramachandra Reddi.
40. Rao Bahadur Sir A. P. Patro.
41. Diwan Bahadur P. C. Ethirajulu Nayudu.
42. Mr. P. T. Rajan.
43. ,, T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliyar.
44. ,, Abdul Razack Sahib.
45. Diwan Bahadur S. Kumaraswami Reddiyar.
46. Khan Sahib T. M. Moidoo Sahib Bahadur.
47. The Zamindar of Mirzapuram.
48. The Kumararaja of Venkatagiri.
49. Mr. A. V. Bhanoji Rao.

Neutral.

1. Mr. P. C. Venkatapati Raju.
2. ,, G. Harisarvottama Rao.
3. ,, C. S. Govindaraja Mudaliyar.
4. ,, K. Madhavan Nayar.
5. Mr. K. V. Krishnaswami Nayakar.
6. ,, Muhammad Meera Ravuttar.
7. Rao Bahadur B. Muniswami Nayudu.

Ayes 20. Noes 49. Neutral 7.

The motion was lost.

* The hon. the President :—" The question is that with a view to the constitution of a Committee on Public Accounts for the year 1929–30, this Council do proceed on a date to be fixed by the hon. the President to elect seven members to be members of the said Committee." 11-45 a.m.

The motion was put to the House and carried.

* The hon. the President :—" In accordance with the regulations framed under Standing Order 68 for the election of the Members of the Public Accounts Committee by means of the single transferable vote, I fix 2 p.m. to-morrow (12th March 1929) as the time within which notice of nominations should be given."

IV

FINANCE COMMITTEE FOR 1929-30.

* The hon. Mr. T. E. Moir :—" I beg to move—

'*that, in accordance with Resolution No.* 17 *passed at the meeting of the Council on* 1*st April* 1921 *regarding the constitution of a Finance Committee, this Council do proceed, on a date to be fixed by the hon. the President, to elect six Members to be Members of the Finance Committee for the year* 1929–30.' "

* The hon. Khan Bahadur Sir Muhammad Usman Sahib Bahadur :—" I second it."

* Mr. J. A. Saldanha :—" I beg to move that in place of the word 'six' in line 4 of the motion the word 'eight' be substituted. My reasons are